

LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE.

PRESIDENT WHITE FOR BLAINE.
A LETTER TO THEODORE ROOSEVELT

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM SAFE ONLY IN REPUBLICAN HANDS.
To the Hon. THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

My Dear Sir:—Admiration for your vigor and courage in supporting various measures of administrative reform thus far, and the relations between us as delegates at the recent National Convention warrant a statement to you of my view as to our best course in the approaching National election.

Like yourself I regard a thorough reform of the general political and administrative system in our country as by far the greatest of all questions before us, and what is known as "civil service reform" as the essential germ and vital beginning of, this whole better system, whether National, State or municipal. As to other questions, the protective system in its important features, intertwined as it is with all the established industries and interests of the country, neither party dares touch. Our foreign relations must be handled virtually in the same way whichever party comes into power; for in either case, there being no Navy to enforce our views of right, a "vigorous foreign policy" must consist mainly of talk; and of this all the other Nations of the world are as well aware as our own. As to the rights of colored voters in the South, no promises are made now which have not been made before. Polygamy each party will probably try to diminish. The currency question is so immediately dangerous that neither party will dare neglect it much longer.

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It goes far deeper than any other pending question, for it aims at nothing less than to abolish the present un-Republican, un-Democratic spoils system, which for many years has been a growing curse to the country; it proposes to destroy that aristocracy and oligarchy of political managers which admits to public offices mainly their own pensioners and henchmen and excludes the capable and honest sons of the great body of citizens of both parties who give themselves to honest toil and not to slaving for political masters. It seeks to restore to the executive and legislative agents of the people time for their legitimate duties which is now consumed in the distribution and brokerage of nearly 100,000 offices, on the basis, not mainly of fitness, but of personal services. In short, it seeks to take this vast multitude of offices out of politics, so that men shall be chosen to elective positions and continued in them for the services they can render to the public, and not for the bargains they can make with local office-seekers.

This, then, being the question of all questions, the essential preliminary of all reforms, I confess frankly that in my opinion the Democratic party were more likely than the Republican to carry out the reforms already begun. I should not hesitate for a moment to vote for Mr. Blaine and the Republican party.

I very seriously question the propriety of any discussion of party issues in the columns of a religious paper, such a paper comes into families of all shades of political thought, and should be neutral. Our secular papers freely discuss the men and the measures of the parties, and we can take them as we wish. But a paper which gives its religious flavor and which contains articles which commend themselves to all men everywhere, should be fair, and as carefully refrain from the consideration of political questions as the pulpit is expected to do.

I am a thorough Republican, and a staunch supporter of Mr. Blaine, and nine tenths of the men of my large congregation think and feel like I do, but because I am the spiritual teacher of all I respect the feelings of all so far as to preach no politics. Your paper has, in my judgment, no more right to become a campaign document than our pulpits have to become a hustings. These views I have always held, and I offer them to you, not in the spirit of criticism, but as my solemn judgment. There are questions entering into the present contest which are to me dearer than any personal considerations. The contest is not between Mr. Blaine and Mr. Cleveland; it is between the Republican and Democratic parties. In the speech of acceptance Governor Cleveland avoids the great questions which have crowded the heads of the Independents, and says that the welfare of the country is involved in our election of a Democratic president. But when he came to declare his candidacy his blunder and would not come to business, which is just where the weakness of both parties lies. The country must be informed of the true nature of their party, but did not tell us what form of truth or what was to go, or how applied to be truthful. He was certain of the unquestioning capacity of his party to rule, but did not tell us what he intended. He was sure that the extension of electricity was a good thing, but gave no information about the composition of the Senate, or whether the potent and sprawling power to nominate and elect should be given to the states. These men did not tell the tale of an idiot, but his oratory was full of sound and fury, signifying only that he was demented, and that one must look elsewhere for the amendment of the country.

The result of the election will depend mainly upon the operations of this oracle's scatterbrained mind and the processes of reasoning, by which some of our friends have brought themselves to the position that the election of Mr. Blaine will be a good thing, and that our national existence will stand upon all the dark places, and then we are to strike the ten thousand strings and sing the exultant strains that lift up the Nations to higher heights of melody.

The distinguished gentlemen whose moral convictions are tested with a frankness and a boldness which is unique among all politicians in the Presidential campaign, and that Cleveland's nomination in itself lights no fires with moral glory, tell us in the wild vagueness of their speeches that the country must be informed of the true nature of their party, but did not tell us what form of truth or what was to go, or how applied to be truthful. He was certain of the unquestioning capacity of his party to rule, but did not tell us what he intended. He was sure that the extension of electricity was a good thing, but gave no information about the composition of the Senate, or whether the potent and sprawling power to nominate and elect should be given to the states. These men did not tell the tale of an idiot, but his oratory was full of sound and fury, signifying only that he was demented, and that one must look elsewhere for the amendment of the country.

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Look at its history as a whole. It invented the spoils system, formulated it, and evidently wishes for nothing better than to fully restore it. Look at its recent history. Take for example its treatment of Senator Pendleton. He had the wisdom and foresight to recognize the importance of initiating a reform in the civil service, both as regards his country and his party. Straightway he was dragged through the mire by the leading Democratic newspapers, deprived ignominiously of the Senateanship, and repudiated by a man infinitely his inferior in every statesmanlike quality, who made haste to join in the old-style fashion at civil service reform, Nor did the Democratic party of the Nation treat Mr. Pendleton any better than that of the State had done. At their recent National Convention the temporary chairman indulged in a fit at the reform, and the climax was reached when General Butler was allowed grossly to insult Mr. Pendleton on account of his connection with civil service reform, and to declare that not a person present who was not a schoolmaster approved it. This was received with universal applause, and with not a dissenting voice from the entire convention than from the Democratic press since.

More fatal still to all hopes of anything better from that party was the deliberate course of that convention in framing its platform. So far as this great subject was concerned it gave the candidates absolutely no plank to stand upon. The reference to it is not merely an evasion; it is a hint as clear as they dare make it that means will be found to nullify what has been done and to restore the old system with all its infamies.

However much, then, I may respect Mr. Cleveland for what he has done as Governor, I see no hope that he can have any similar career of reform as President. He cannot resist his entire party. They are "very hungry and very thirsty" with the hunger and thirst of twenty-four years, and in case of victory no President without far greater support than he can hope for could resist their onset. To strengthen him at Albany there was a civil service element in our State of some value; but to support him at Washington that element, diluted and neutralized by the party in the whole Nation, will be practically infinitesimal. At Albany he had backers in his party; at Washington he must stand virtually alone so far as his party is concerned. With all his good intentions he would be as powerless to resist the fanned cohorts of plunder from East and West and South and North as the sturdiest munter of the plains would be to withstand single and alone a rushing herd of wild buffaloes.

What, on the other hand, are the chances of the reform from the Republican party? Despite many sins and shortcomings it has already done much, and is certain to do more. The platform and candidate are at last committed fully and unequivocally to the right side of the question. While the Democratic National Convention gave its nomine to a civil service plank to stand upon, the Republican party gave its nomine, on this question, the soundest plank of the whole platform—a plank hewn out by the honored leader of the reform in our own State and fitted in by a leader of the same sort from the State of Massachusetts. Better than this, the Republican candidate has not only accepted it, but has agreed to more than the boldest of us dared ask. In the light of his experience as Secretary of State, he has virtually pledged himself to labor for the extension of the system into the consular and diplomatic service. If he is elected we shall have the right to insist, and I fully believe we may safely—upon the extension of the system to those most important branches of the public service, so that through our National servants abroad in various grades may know less of wire-pulling than at present they will know more of those things absolutely essential to any proper representation of American interests in the countries to which they are accredited; in short, that a new and grand career will be opened to the bright and bold young men in the country, which has long been virtually closed to them and largely used for penning out decaying politicians. This position of the Republican platform thus distinct and decided, and this alone, determines my vote.

If it be said that Mr. Blaine did not formerly support the reform, I answer that very few of us supported it even then. If it be said that he has used the old methods, I answer that he has used the old methods, and especially to our grand Empire state, and especially to

been prominent in National affairs. Whatever men have said of him they have never charged him with want of shrewdness or quickness in ascertaining the current of public opinion or with Bourbon inability to forget outward methods. His letter of acceptance shows that he recognises the new element which, if it be not regarded, will leave the spurs in a hopeless minority in some of the more important States. He has learned by this time that there are in the State of New-York alone some twelve thousand school districts, and that in almost every one of them there is a small number, and in some a large number, of men to whom this question has become paramount, who have against the spoils system something of that bitter hatred which in the old days was felt against slavery, and which used to be called "fanaticism." He knows that this old feeling developed, and he can easily see how this new feeling will develop. But it may be said that the Democratic party also has learned something. Doubtless it has learned something on questions already decided; but not on this all-important question of a reform in the civil service. The trouble with the Democratic party for the last forty years has been that it has never seen any great question until the country, thanks to the Republican party, had got past it. The only source from which the Democratic party has learned anything during all these years has been Republican victories. On slavery, the war, reconstruction, finance, the currency, education in the South—on every great question—the Republican party has had to educate the Democratic party by force of arms. As to the rights of colored voters in the South, no promises are made now which have not been made before. Polygamy each party will probably try to diminish. The currency question is so immediately dangerous that neither party will dare neglect it much longer.

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